

6 December 2016

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Most Eminent Highness,

With this letter, I present to you an authentic copy of the letter, dated December 1, 2016, which I have received on December 5, 2016, from His Holiness, Pope Francis, regarding his deep concern for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and its fidelity to its nature as a lay religious order and its close bond with Holy See. He had presented in depth his concerns in the audience he granted to me on November 10th last.

As you will note, he asks me to work with you to carry out the necessary vigilance over the life and works of the Order, noting especially the purification of a mundane spirit and of the use of methods and means contrary to the moral law. It is my intention to work steadfastly with you in addressing the various concerns of the Holy Father.

As the representative of the Roman Pontiff to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, I am deeply concerned that the great gift of the Order to the Church be safeguarded and promoted, in accord with its long and noble tradition, for the good of the individual members and of the universal Church. Given the seriousness of the matter, I ask your fullest cooperation, lest the Holy Father find it necessary to address directly his concerns through a visitation of the Order.

Invoking God's blessing upon you, your family, your religious consecration, and all your works on behalf of the Order, and confiding your intentions to the intercession of Our Lady of Philermè, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Joseph, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Matthew Apostle and Evangelist, and Blessed Gerard, Founder of our Order, I remain

Yours devotedly in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,

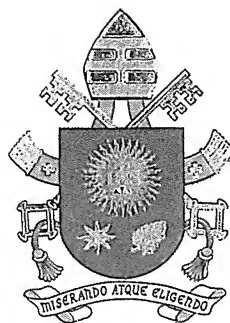
Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

Cardinal Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

(with enclosure)

COPY: The Most Reverend Jean LAFFITTE

His Most Eminent Highness
Fra' Matthew FESTING
Prince and Grand Master
Sovereign Military Order of Malta
Palazzo Magistrale
Via Condotti, 68
00187 ROMA



Al Venerato Fratello
il Sig. Cardinale **RAYMOND LEO BURKE**
Patrono del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta

Come ho avuto già occasione di manifestarle durante l'udienza del 10 novembre u.s., desidero qui ribadire che mi sta fortemente a cuore che lo storico e benemerito Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta sia sempre più fedele alla sua natura di Ordine religioso laicale, dedito alla *"promozione della gloria di Dio mediante la santificazione dei membri, il servizio alla Fede e al Santo Padre e l'aiuto al prossimo"* (Carta Costituzionale, Art. 2 par. 1).

In questo senso, è importante che all'interno dell'Ordine si rafforzi l'autentico spirito religioso e lo stretto legame con il Romano Pontefice, secondo il dono dello Spirito Santo concesso ad esso al momento della sua fondazione e riconosciuto dal mio venerato Predecessore Papa Pasquale II.

Prego perciò Vostra Eminenza, in qualità di Cardinale Patrono, affinché, in collaborazione con il Principe Gran Maestro dell'Ordine, svolga a tal fine l'opportuna vigilanza, in esecuzione del suo compito di *"promuovere gli interessi spirituali dell'Ordine e dei suoi membri ed i rapporti fra la Santa Sede e l'Ordine"* (Carta Costituzionale, Art. 4 par. 4).

In particolare, si dovrà evitare che nell'Ordine si introducano manifestazioni di spirito mondano, come pure appartenenze ad associazioni, movimenti e organizzazioni contrari alla fede cattolica o di stampo relativista. Qualora ciò dovesse verificarsi, si inviteranno i Cavalieri che eventualmente fossero membri di tali associazioni, movimenti ed organizzazioni a ritirare la loro adesione, essendo essa incompatibile con la fede cattolica e l'appartenenza all'Ordine.

Andrà inoltre particolarmente curato che nelle iniziative e opere assistenziali dell'Ordine non vengano impiegati e diffusi metodi e mezzi contrari alla legge morale. Se in passato è sorto qualche problema in questo ambito, mi auguro che

possa essere completamente risolto. Mi dispiacerebbe sinceramente, infatti, se alcuni alti Ufficiali - come Lei stesso mi ha riferito - pur sapendo di queste prassi, concernenti soprattutto la distribuzione di contraccettivi di qualsiasi tipo, non siano finora intervenuti per porvi fine. Non dubito però che, seguendo il principio paolino di *“operare la verità nella carità”* (Ef. 4,15), si riuscirà a entrare in dialogo con loro ed ottenere le necessarie rettifiche.

Vostra Eminenza non mancherà, infine, insieme ai responsabili dell'Ordine, di esplicitare in forma sempre più evidente lo stretto legame che unisce il Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta al Romano Pontefice, sia nella sua struttura che nel suo funzionamento, affinché possa proseguire efficacemente nella realizzazione della sua duplice finalità di difesa della Fede e di cura dei bisognosi, specialmente gli ammalati.

Le sarò grato se Ella vorrà continuare a tenermi informato su queste materie, mentre volentieri Le assicuro la mia preghiera e Le impartisco la Benedizione Apostolica, che estendo al Principe Gran Maestro e a tutti i membri dell'Ordine.

Dal Vaticano, 1 dicembre 2016

Francesco

To the Venerable Brother

Cardinal RAYMOND LEO BURKE

Patron of the Sovereign Order of Malta

As I said to you during our audience of the 10th November, I hereby reiterate that I care very much that the historical and meritorious Sovereign Order of Malta remains ever more faithful to its nature as a lay religious Order, dedicated to "*the promotion of the glory of God through the sanctification of its members, service to the Faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one's neighbor*" (Constitutional Charter, Art. 2, par. 1).

For this reason, it is important that, from within the Order, the authentic religious spirit and the close connection with the Roman Pontiff be reinforced, in accordance with the gift of the Holy Spirit which was conceded at the moment of the Order's foundation by my venerated predecessor Pope Paschal II.

I therefore ask Your Eminence, as Cardinal Patronus, collaborating with the Prince and Grand Master of the Order, to ensure that you carry out your duty of "*promoting the spiritual interests of the Order and its members and relations between the Holy See and the Order*" (Constitutional Charter, Art. 4 par. 4).

In particular, members of the Order must avoid secular and frivolous behaviour, such as membership to associations, movements and organisations which are contrary to the Catholic faith or of a relativist nature. In such cases, Knights who are members of these associations, movements and organisations should be asked to remove themselves from the Order, because their behaviour is incompatible with Catholic faith and membership of the Order of Malta.

Furthermore, the Order must ensure that the methods and means it uses in its initiatives and healthcare works are not contrary to moral law. If in the past there has been a problem of this nature, I hope that it can be completely resolved. I would be very disappointed if- as you told me- some of the high Officers were aware of practices such as the distribution of any type of contraceptives and have not yet intervened to end such things. I have no doubts that by following the principle of Paul and "*speaking the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4, 15), the matter can be discussed with these Officers and the necessary rectification obtained.

Your Eminence, together with the leaders of the Order, will have to make ever more clear the close connection which unites the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the Roman Pontiff, both from a structural and operational point-of-view. This will ensure that the Order continues to carry out its double purpose- defence of the Faith and caring for the needy, especially the sick.

I would appreciate it if you could keep me informed on these matters and, in the meantime, I am pleased to assure you of my prayers and give you the Apostolic Blessing, which I also extend to the Prince and Grand Master and to all members of the Order.

From the Vatican, 1 December 2016